

PHILIPPIANS

BACKGROUND:

Sometime in 62 A.D., Paul writes from prison (one of the four prison epistles, the others being Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon) a thank you note to the believers at Philippi for their help in his hour of need, and uses the occasion to send along some instructions on Christian unity. Within their own ranks, fellow workers in the church are at odds, hindering the work in proclaiming new life in Christ. Evidence of this is found in 1:27 where he speaks of being firm in one spirit, with one mind, serving side by side; in 2:2-5 again mentioning same mind, same love, full of accord, of one mind, doing nothing from rivalry (pride that prompts people to push for their own way), or conceit (self-glory), and to look out for the interests of others and to have same attitude as Jesus Christ (humility); and in 2:14 he admonishes them to do all things without grumbling; in 4:1-5 he asks that two women who had helped him in the ministry "agree in the Lord," and asks the believers to let their reasonableness (opposite of retaliation) be known to everyone. And in chapter two He cites Christ's own example of humility. It almost sounds like Paul could be writing to a church in this present day.

Paul seems to have a deep and special love for these people and often expresses his fond affection for them. "Joy" or "rejoice" appear 16 times in the four chapters. The church at Philippi was the first church Paul established in Macedonia when in 51 A.D. he arrived with Luke, Titus and Timothy on his second missionary journey. He visited there again on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:1, 6). Philippi was a Roman colony and a military outpost. People living there were regarded as citizens of Rome, which allowed them special privileges.

There is encouragement here for a lifestyle of unity, holiness and joy. Christ is mentioned in all four chapters. In 1:21 Paul sees Christ as his life, "For to me, to live IS Christ." In 2:5 Christ is the model of true humility ("Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"). In 3:21 Christ is the One "who will transform our lowly body that it may be

conformed to His glorious body." In 4:13 He is the source of Paul's power over circumstances ("I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.")

In just seven verses (2:5-11) are profound insights into the preexistence, incarnation, humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ.

This letter, you will find, is full of encouragement and instruction and worth more study. Listen to the words of Paul as though he were speaking to you as a member of the church at Philippi. Listen, as he tells you to stand fast, be of the same mind, rejoice always, be humble, and pray about everything.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF PHILIPPIANS

- PAUL'S ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES (1:1-30).
- PAUL GIVES EXAMPLES OF HUMILITY (2:1-30).
- PAUL'S APPEAL TO KNOW CHRIST (3:1-21).
- PAUL'S APPEAL TO HAVE THE PEACE OF CHRIST (4:1-23).

HELPS: Before turning to these, read prayerfully the Word of God, praying that the Holy Spirit will guide you and instruct you.

If you don't own a Bible dictionary, encyclopedia, atlas, or reference search, don't worry. They are all available on the link below.

http://www.preceptaustin.org/2_corinthians_commentaries_3.htm

This excellent website is full of helps including commentaries. You will find John MacArthur, Ray Stedman and John Piper along with Charles Spurgeon and the Intervarsity Press Commentary (Navigators) as well as Matthew Henry's Commentary.